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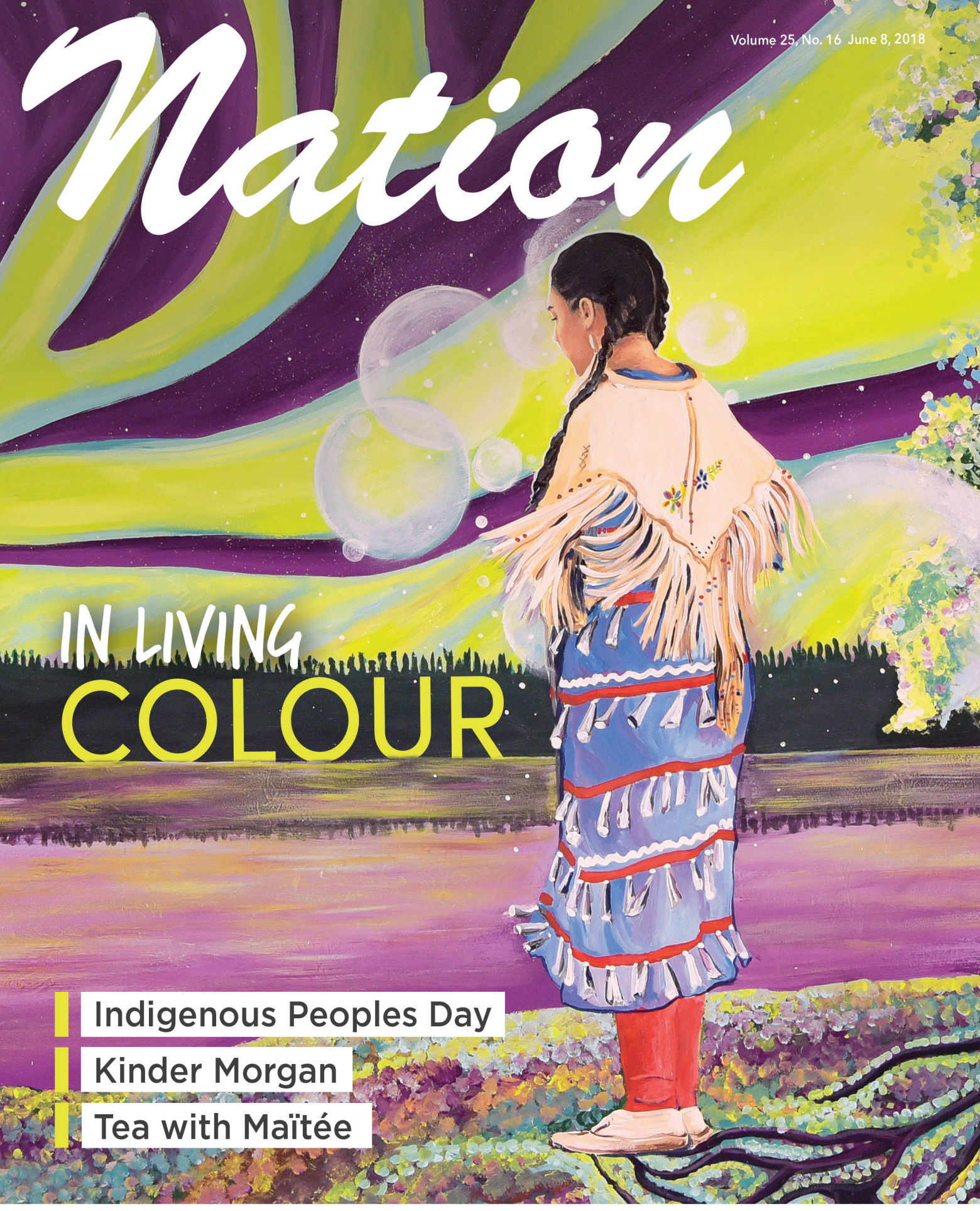

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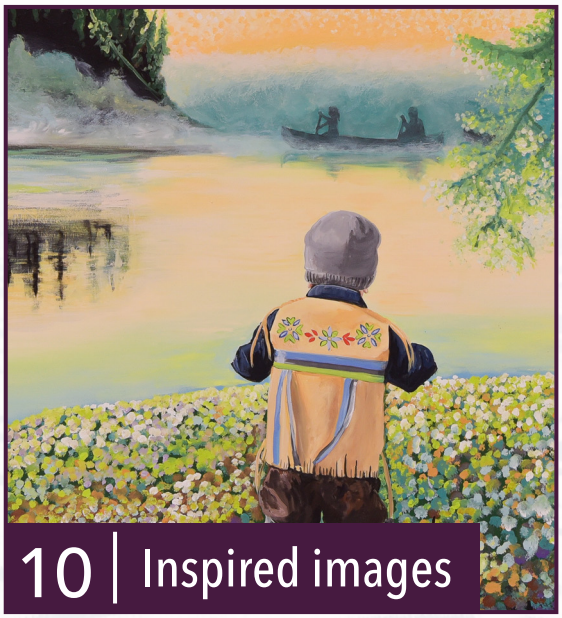

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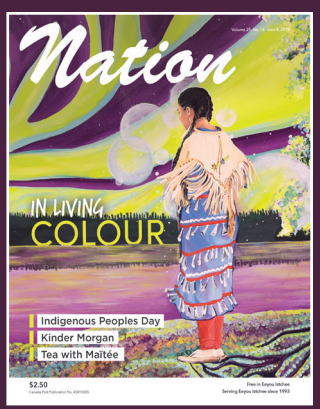

Photo by Catherine Quinn

Editorial

A simple message

by Will Nicholls

Grand Chief Abel Bosum's presentation May 29 to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples is an appropriate message for our National Aboriginal Day issue.

Invited to speak on MP Romeo Saganash's private member's bill to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Grand Chief didn't mince words.

"The simple message that I have for you is that it is possible to fully acknowledge and give substance to Indigenous rights in a way that does not negate the roles of provincial governments, the federal government and industry," Bosum told the senators on the committee. "It is possible to implement all the essential elements of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the sky will not fall. The current situation of our Cree Nation bears out this assertion."

When Quebec announced the "project of the century" in the early 1970s – the largest hydroelectric project in the world at the time – it did so without consulting or obtaining the consent of the Cree. This approach reflected Eurocentric colonial practices, Bosum observed. "These concepts held that Indigenous peoples were simply non-humans, squatters at best, and without rights. The Cree Nation refused to accept this premise."

Successful legal action eventually resulted in the 1975 James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA), the first modern treaty in Canada. The JBNQA contained the seeds of self-governance and various protections for the Cree way of life. Implementing the JBNQA took over 25 years and numerous court battles but 2002 saw the Paix des Braves signed with Quebec and then in 2008 a "New Relationship Agreement" reached with Canada. Both of those agreements empowered the Cree to assume unfulfilled obligations on behalf of Canada and Quebec.

"These agreements affirmed our authority to govern ourselves, and our entitlement to participate in economic development within our territory," said Bosum.

Last year the Cree signed the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee Governance Agreement with Canada, which devolved authority to make laws over lands under federal jurisdiction in Eeyou Istchee to Cree First Nations and the Cree Nation Government. These laws do not require approval from Canada. "We will soon be in the process of further developing our own Cree Constitution, which enshrines our basic rights, institutions and governmental processes," said Bosum.

In the four decades since the signing of the JBNQA, Bosum emphasized, Crees have dramatically improved the standard of living in their communities.

"We play an important role in the governance and in the economic development of our traditional territory," he said. "We have empowered our people to be responsible for our own affairs. We have worked hard over the past 40 years to put all the necessary building blocks in place to engage in a unique form of Indigenous nation building. We have achieved all these advances and the sky did not fall. Canadians do not need to fear that recognizing, acknowledging and giving expression to Indigenous rights results in 'giving the farm away'."

Bosum eloquently expressed why Canadians do not have to be afraid of Indigenous self-government. Respecting their rights and ways of life does nothing to diminish their own. A great message, a simple message, and one we should all listen to. To read Grand Chief Abel Bosum's presentation to the Senate go to: cngov.ca.

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News

Improving Cree education

Celebrating 40 years of the Cree School Board

By Amy German

Attendees at the Regional General Assembly of the Cree School Board (CSB) in Eastmain June 5-6 marked the board's 40th anniversary with a refreshed sense of purpose and direction.

While there was some reminiscing of the CSB's early years, this anniversary's focus was on the last decade because it was during this time that the CSB underwent a great deal of change, growth and restructuring. This was done to ensure that Cree children were being educated on par with rest of the province and developing their reading skills at an earlier age so they wouldn't face the difficulties previous generations had.

Indeed, CSB Chairperson Kathleen Wooten said the last decade deserved its own celebration. In 2008, an educational review of the CSB, titled "Communication, Accountability and Follow-up for School Improvement" (CAFSI), was released. Commissioned by the CSB and written by two consulting agencies, this independent report revealed the shortcomings of the school board. This prompted the CSB to achieve better results.

"That is when the improvement process began," explained Wooten. "We looked at everything, and started collecting more data to see where our students were and what our graduation rates were. We made sure to collect the right information to help us target weak areas so we could track them, and work on improving them."

In the late 1990s, prior to the report, there were students who would graduate from CSB schools but were unable to continue at the post-secondary level because they did not possess the proper language skills. For the past 10 years the CSB has been working on solving this problem, which the CAFSI report had highlighted.

The CAFSI report also prompted the CSB to reassess its graduation rate as there were years when some communities had no graduating students who had completed five consecutive years of high school. Since then several new programs have been implemented, including the Success for All program, which now has Cree students reading at the same level as students throughout the province. Plus, several summer reading camps have been set up to prevent learning loss over the summer break.

At the time the CAFSI report was released, our graduation rate was around seven or eight percent. We are hoping that with these changes there will be a boom of graduates.
- CSB Chairperson Kathleen Wooten

"At the time the CAFSI report was released, our graduation rate was around seven or eight percent. We are hoping that with these changes there will be a boom of graduates. Last year, we were up at 25 percent. When we do our statistics we only count the students who graduated after five consecutive years of education, and not those who did it in six or seven years," explained Wooten.

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Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)
Grand Conseil des Cris (Eeyou Istchee)

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Cree Nation Government
Gouvernement de la Nation Crie

Message from the Cree Nation Government on National Indigenous Day 2018

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Today, on National Indigenous Day, we celebrate the strength and the resilience of the roughly 1.5 million individual Indigenous people in Canada, and the collectivities of communities, Nations and Tribes of which we are all part–well over 600 across the country, from sea to sea to sea. We have all, in one way or another, survived many personal, political and economic struggles and challenges. What we share in common, and what unites us, is that, for all of us, it has been our Indigenous heritages and our pride in those heritages, that have guided us and sustained us.

This past year has once again shown to the people of Eeyou Istchee what we can accomplish when we stand united, as one. We have secured the recognition of our right to fully govern ourselves with our own laws and rules, and our own institutions developed by our own people. The passing of the Cree Governance Agreement and Constitution Act by the Parliament of Canada was not only a historic milestone for the Cree Nation, but also marked an important step on the path towards reconciliation between Canada and Indigenous people. We are demonstrating that reconciliation is possible based on a recognition of Indigenous rights and the translation of those rights into tangible governance systems and development practices. Reconciliation takes hard work, but it can be achieved honourably and with outcomes that everyone can take pride in. We are always open to sharing our experiences with our brothers and sisters across the country who are also working towards developing new governance arrangements, and away from a colonial past.

As we continue on our path of becoming masters of our destiny, let us today celebrate what has made us who we are–our language, our culture, our traditions, and most importantly, the land, Eeyou Istchee. Our ancestors have walked this land, and have taken care of this land, for millennia. It is up to every generation to take its turn to do what they can to protect our land. And, it is also up to every generation to protect our rights so that future generations may benefit from the bounty of the land, and from the achievements of an effective and unified Cree Nation.

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Hints after breaking: sample metallic minerals

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SIGNATURE _____

SAMPLE LOCATION PLACE NAME _____
MAP _____
GPS COORDINATES _____ E _____ N
SAMPLE COLLECTED FROM ☐ Shore Line ☐ Island
☐ Stream Bank ☐ River Bank ☐ Lake Side ☐ Mountain ☐ Other

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Hotel of the Year

The Cree-owned Quality Inn & Suites in Val-d'Or has been named the 2018 Canadian Hotel of the Year by the hotel chain – the second time the hotel has won the honour. In 2014, it was recognized as not only Canadian Hotel of the Year, but also the Quality brand's International Hotel of the Year.

It's also the sixth consecutive year the hotel on rue de l'Escale is taking home the prestigious Platinum Hospitality Award.

The announcement was made May 8 at the 64th annual Choice Hotels International Convention in Las Vegas. On May 23, Quality Inn & Suites, Val-d'Or hosted a ceremony for the official presentation of the award.

"Val-d'Or is one of our most awarded hotels across the system," said Choice Hotels Canada President Brian Leon. "The ownership and hotel team truly embody the best of the best and are committed to providing superior guest experience."

Bill C-262 adopted

The NDP MP for Abitibi–Baie-James–Nunavik–Eeyou, Romeo Saganash, achieved a major goal when his private member's Bill C-262 was passed.

"May 30 is now historic day in Canada and around the world. UNDRIP has been adopted by Canada," exclaimed Grand Chief Abel Bosum.

Bosum went on to congratulate all the Cree who have worked for over 30 years to realize this victory for the Indigenous people of Canada. Passed with vote of 206-79 in the House of Commons, Bill C-262 is now on its way to the Senate.

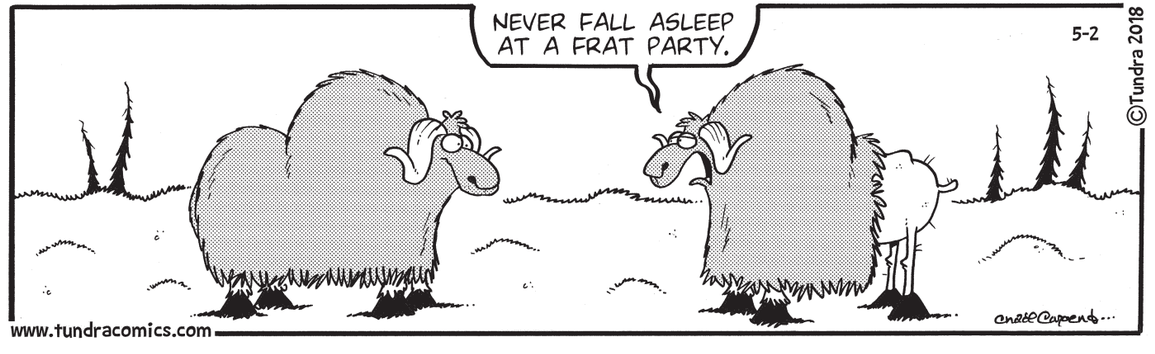
In Brief

CERP hearings come north

The Public Inquiry Commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Quebec, known by its French acronym, CERP, will hold public hearings In the Cree Nation of Mistissini from June 11-20 at the Neoskweskau Complex.

Polar Bear derails

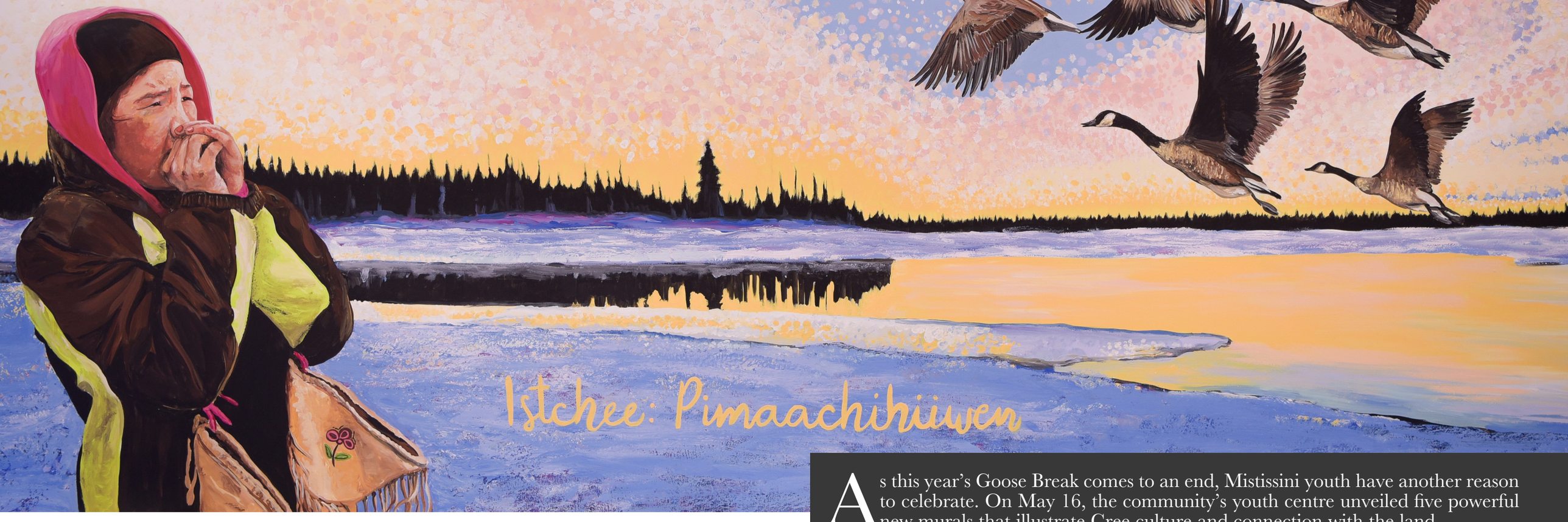
The Polar Bear Express was heading south to Cochrane on May 30 when a mere 24 miles from Moosonee it went off the tracks. Only minor injuries were reported for the 80 passengers and crew. Officials said they are still investigating what caused the accident. Rail service should be restored by June 4.



Mistissini's youth centre
unveils mural project

Painting Pride

by Patrick Quinn | Photos by Catherine Quinn



As this year's Goose Break comes to an end, Mistissini youth have another reason to celebrate. On May 16, the community's youth centre unveiled five powerful new murals that illustrate Cree culture and connection with the land.

Misiwe chi paayikutaausiinaaanu

*"They love the land in **every season** and wanted to see that in the murals"*
– *Catherine Quinn*

Catherine Quinn and Sophie Stella Boivin led this special project in collaboration with Mistissini youth. Quinn told the Nation that Youth Development Coordinator Samantha Awashish asked her to create the murals because Awashish appreciated the similar work that had been done at the Quinn-owned Meechum grocery store.

Quinn was enthusiastic about the opportunity but wanted to bring aboard a professional muralist to simplify the process. She immediately thought of Boivin, who is also First Nations and was excited to return north. The two first worked together seven years ago when Boivin created murals for the Mistissini clinic and Quinn played the role of community guide.

This was their first true collaboration as artists and proved to be a transformative experience for both. For Quinn, it signified the beginning of a career in the visual arts following years of studies. It also marked a return to her native Mistissini after living away from home most of her life.

"Coming back and then working with the youth, asking what made them happy and peaceful to be incorporated into the mural, hearing them talk about the things they love being the same things that I loved," she said. "Being on the land, seeing geese and moose – the connection they had with the land and the culture was something I also identified with very much. It helped me feel even more connected doing the project with them."

Boivin and Quinn brought these ideas back to the studio to brainstorm, taking inspiration from the landscape photography of Brendan Forward. Using Photoshop, they merged Forward's pictures with concepts provided by the youth to create five panels that portray Eeyou Istchee.

"They love the land in every season and wanted to see that in the murals," said Quinn. "We were asked to write uplifting and inspiring quotes to go with each mural and had them translated into Cree. The concept and designs that came from these ideas from the youth were beautiful!"

About 20 young members of the community participated in the painting. Boivin and Quinn had drawn outlines on the panels and

Naskumuu

mixed the paints, creating a welcoming environment for beginners to contribute.

One youth, Leah Matoush, demonstrated particular initiative. She came every day, completing an entire panel herself with a little guidance from the experts. Her signature can be seen on the "Journey Walkers" panel.

"It was incredible for us to witness her growth and talent as an artist!" Quinn exclaimed.

Each mural depicts culturally significant aspects of the land and people, including a toddler glimpsing canoes through the mist after his Walking Out Ceremony, a young girl calling geese at sunset, a moose grazing peacefully in a forest, and a traditionally dressed woman gazing at the Northern Lights as the roots of a tree glow beneath her feet.

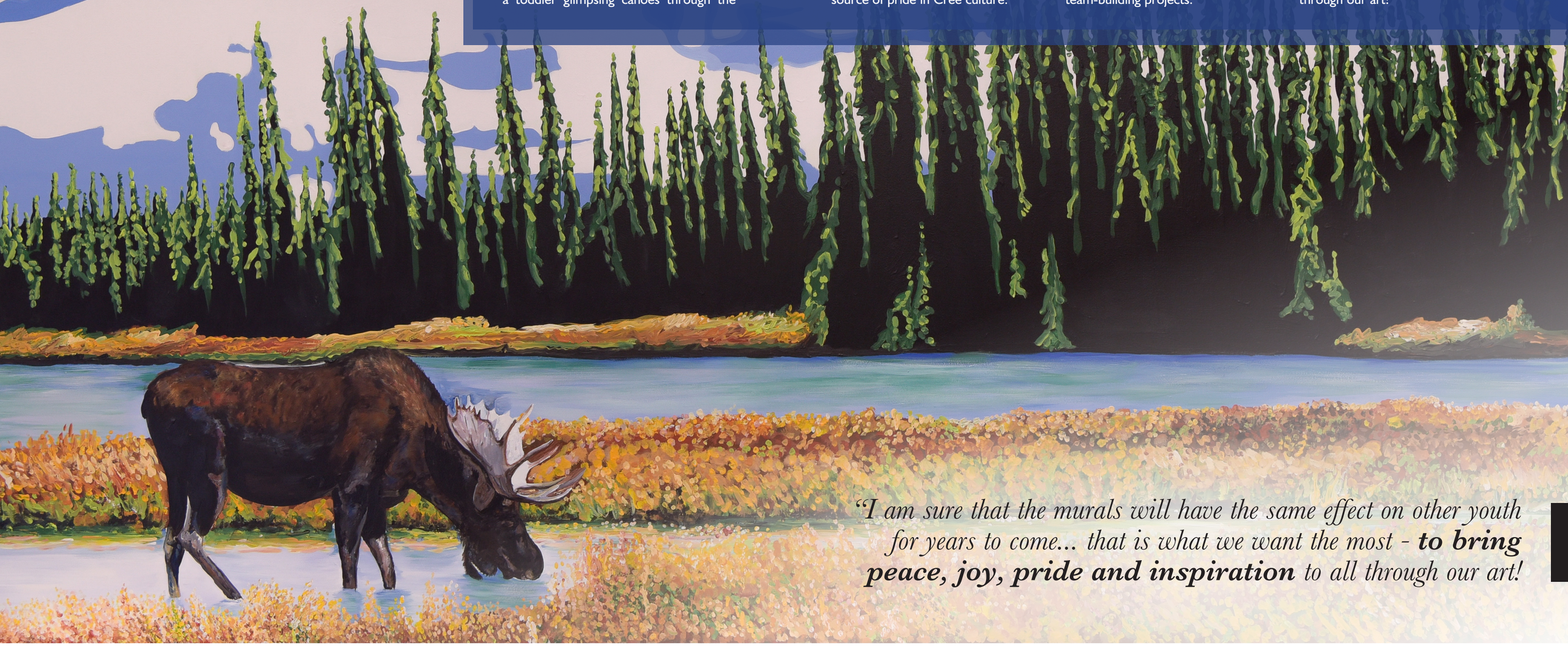
The Mistissini youth centre is an important social hub for the community's younger members. The murals are a permanent addition to its common area, offering the wisdom that might be heard from an Elder, and will serve as a source of pride in Cree culture.

The murals received an enthusiastic reaction from the three-dozen people who attended the unveiling. Chief Richard Shecapio said he loved the images and that the ideas had come from the youth. Deputy Chief Gerald Longchap said he could stay for hours just looking, while others were visibly emotional to see the youth connected to the land and culture.

Quinn and Boivin intend to continue pursuing similar projects, working with youth and other organizations for team-building projects.

One of Quinn's favourite moments came as they were putting the finishing touches on the murals and she noticed a shy teenager standing in the back. He told her he was drawn to the murals, and that they made him feel connected, peaceful and happy.

"I am sure that the murals will have the same effect on other youth for years to come," she observed. "That is what we want the most – to bring peace, joy, pride and inspiration to all through our art!"



*"I am sure that the murals will have the same effect on other youth for years to come... that is what we want the most - **to bring peace, joy, pride and inspiration** to all through our art!*

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May this longest day of the year
enlighten your spirit and soul
and shine on your loved ones.

Enjoy National
Indigenous People's day!

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Puisse ce jour le plus long
de l'année illuminer votre esprit et
votre âme et briller sur vos proches.

Joyeuse Journée nationale
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ÉLÉONORE

The Nation's annual roundup of ways to celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day

by Dan Isaac | Photos provided by APTN

Strength, Resilience, Beauty

This June 21 marks Canada's first official National Indigenous Peoples Day. Of course, it's not a new day, nor a statutory holiday – just a name for a day.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made the name-change announcement during last year's National Aboriginal Day. He also took the time to re-name Langevin Block, the office that sits across Parliament Hill and houses the executive branch of the federal government.

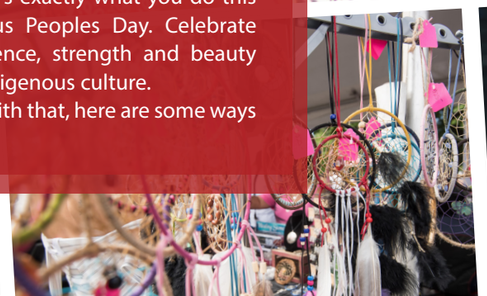
Trudeau says he did so because of Hector-Louis Langevin's role in establishing the residential-school system. And while some will take the word "Indigenous" over "Aboriginal" any day, and agree that people responsible for generations of suffering shouldn't be honoured, it feels like another empty symbolic gesture in a long line of empty symbolic gestures.

It's been a tough year for Indigenous people in Canada, not unlike any other year. The verdicts in the Colten Boushie and Tina Fontaine court cases linger as a reminder that racism, systemic or otherwise, is alive and well in this country.

Now, Trudeau's Liberals, with $4.5B of Canadian taxpayers' dollars, have purchased a pipeline project in direct conflict with many First Nations whose traditional territories will be affected by it.

But in the face of these cynical politics, it's important to remember that in spite of them (current and historic) Indigenous people are still here. That alone is something worth celebrating. And we here at the Nation hope that's exactly what you do this Indigenous Peoples Day. Celebrate the resilience, strength and beauty that is Indigenous culture.

And with that, here are some ways to do so.



DOWN SOUTH

Indigenous Peoples Day Live

This year, APTN's Indigenous Peoples Day Live (IDL) will span three stages across Eastern Canada June 23. The live, five-hour event will be on television, radio and online and will be broadcast simultaneously from Ottawa's Massey Park, Toronto's Fort York and The Forks in Winnipeg.

In each city, the concert begins in the evening and is precluded by a non-televised day of events including a sunrise ceremony in the morning, a powwow in the afternoon and lots more.

During the powwow portion of the day, each city will simultaneously participate in a Round Dance and broadcast live on APTN.

National host and former Mrs. Universe Ashley Callingbull will be broadcasting live from Winnipeg throughout the concerts and will be joined on the main stage at The Forks by up-and-coming acts like hip-hop duo Snotty Nose Rez Kids, the Vancouver-based indie-folk-pop group Sister Says, as well as Attawapiskat's own Midnight Shine.

The day's largest concert will take place in Toronto where host Grace Dove (*The Revenant*) will welcome performers like rapper Kardinal Offishall, Six Nations' Logan Staats, and the 2016 JUNO Indigenous Album of the Year winners, Quantum Tangle.

Be sure to tune in if you can't make it to one of the IDL stages.

indigenousdaylive.ca

May everyone have an excellent National Indigenous Peoples Day!

Que tous passent une excellente journée de la Fête Nationale des Peuples Autochtones!

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Jean Boucher - MNA Ungava | ᐊᓴᓐ ᔦᓂ - ᑎᐊᓯᒋᑎᓂᐣ ᐊᐱᒋᐊᑦᐊᓂᓐ ᐅᑦᐦ ᐅᓀᑫᐦᐧᐃᓐ

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Montreal

On June 21 at noon in Old Montreal, Terre en Vues and the Montreal First Peoples' Festival will hold a ceremony to highlight and honour Indigenous Peoples from across the province.

The event will host speakers and performances from a diverse group of Indigenous individuals and artists and will take place in the presence of First Nations leaders. A sacred fire will be set up to mark the day of celebrations.

"This will be an opportunity to assert our will to see a permanent cultural centre built in Montreal as ambassador of the Indigenous cultures," said Henry Welsh, Terre en Vues' media-relations director. "We shall mobilize all the communities in this goal."

A full list of speakers and performers will be announced in the coming weeks.

presenceautochtone.ca

Ottawa

Hosted on the traditional territory of the Algonquin people, the Summer Solstice Indigenous Festival in Ottawa will take place June 21-24 and is partnered with IDL and the Cree Native Arts and Crafts Association.

On June 21 the festival hosts an education day, welcoming 5000 students from the surrounding areas to the grounds of Massey Park to learn about different Indigenous cultures and peoples through a rotating line-up of workshops and cultural events. That evening, there will be a free public screening of *Indian Horse* in the park.

The festival will host a pow-wow June 23-24, and though they will be sharing Massey Park with IDL, there will be an alternate concert at the Solstice Festival's Celebration Stage with a full line-up of performers and storytellers to be announced in the coming days.

If you're looking to make the trip, the festival recommends the Rideau Heights Campground, or the Wesley Clover Parks Campground.

ottawasummersolstice.ca

Bonne Journée nationale des peuples autochtones !
Que cette journée spéciale soit remplie de célébrations
et de fierté pour toutes les Premières Nations et tous les Inuit.
Happy National Indigenous Peoples Day!
May this special day be filled with celebrations
and pride for all First Nations and Inuit peoples.
Geoffrey Kelley
Ministre responsable des Affaires autochtones
Minister responsible for Native Affairs
ENSEMBLE on fait avancer le Québec
Québec

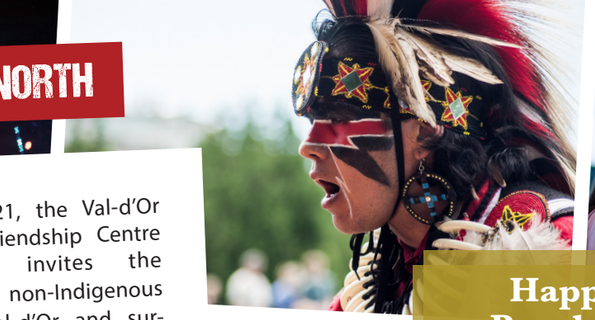
UP NORTH

Val-d'Or

On June 21, the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre (VDNFC) invites the Indigenous and non-Indigenous people from Val-d'Or and surrounding areas to a gathering based on cross-cultural understanding and the recognition of First Peoples' contribution to Val-d'Or's cultural and community life.

Hosted at their cultural site Kinawit, located on 255 Chemin des Scouts, the celebrations begin at 5 am with a sunrise ceremony. In the afternoon, the VDNFC will host a cultural ceremony at the Kijaté social housing site before returning to the Kinawit site for an afternoon of performances, vendors and traditional food tasting.

If you're in the area, be sure to check it out!



Happy Indigenous Peoples Day from all of us here at the Nation!

Chibougamau

Initially, the Chibougamau Eenou Friendship Centre had hoped to inaugurate their new centre on June 21. But according to the centre's executive director, Jo-Ann Toulouse, they decided in late May to postpone the opening.

Instead, they will inaugurate the new building in August and tie-in some of the festivities that were planned for Indigenous Peoples Day then.

"It will very much be a day of awareness and celebrations," said Toulouse of this year's June 21 event. "But it will be on a smaller scale than what we've been doing on Aboriginal Day for the past 35 years."

With input from their Elders, they've decided to move the annual walking-out ceremony to June 23 but are still encouraging people to come and celebrate. The centre will later announce a revised plan for Indigenous Peoples Day.

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The city and the mayor wish you,

Bonne Fête Nationale Autochtone

Happy National Indigenous Peoples Day

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Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)
Grand Conseil des Cris (Eeyou Istchee)

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Our best wishes to all Aboriginal peoples on this National Aboriginal Day

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The *Fondation de l'Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue* and the *Corporation de développement de l'enseignement supérieur de la Vallée-de-l'Or* recognized three Aboriginal students as recipients of academic scholarships, for the excellence of their academic record, their involvement in the community and their courage in returning to school.

UQAT LA FONDATION | CDES Corporation de développement de l'enseignement supérieur de la Vallée-de-l'Or

HAPPY NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY

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Indigenous Superheroes

New role models to empower the youth

by Patrick Quinn

For countless kids around the world, comic books are the gateway to reading for pleasure and an opportunity to project themselves into imaginative stories of powerful heroes. Naturally, they look for characters they can relate to.

Line art by Sean Izaakse. Colors by Marcio Menyz. Champions and all related content Copyright © Marvel Comics.

Finding accurate depictions in works of fiction hasn't often been easy for Indigenous readers, whose cultures have long been misrepresented or stereotyped throughout mass media – when they appear at all. That's why the new Inuk superhero from Marvel Comics is such a big deal.

Amka Aliyak – aka Snowguard – is the newest recruit to the Marvel comic book universe. She joins the Champions, a diverse group of teenaged superheroes that includes Spiderman, Iron Man, Ms. Marvel and the Hulk.

She's described as an independent and courageous 16-year-old from Pangnirtung, Nunavut, a scenic village of 1500 located 50 kilometres south of the Arctic Circle on Baffin Island.

Amka first appears in the story investigating a mysterious new factory near her community, where she discovers a villain using the land's spiritual energy to fuel his plans for conquest. In attempting to release the captured spirits, she becomes empowered by the Inuit spirit-force "Sila", which allows her to shapeshift and harness powerful animal traits.

When Toronto-based writer Jim Zub took over the Champions series, he proposed adding a new hero to the team, one who showed a side of Canada that hasn't had much representation in superhero stories.

He turned to Inuit myths as a base for character development and was put in touch with Nyla Innuksuk, a producer of film and virtual-reality content who grew up in Igloolik and Iqaluit.

"I was really excited to hear that there would be an Inuk superhero in the Marvel Universe," Innuksuk told the CBC. "Inuit are oral storytellers and our myths and legends are full of spirits and characters that take both human and animal forms, so I was excited to see how those elements could be interpreted within the structure of a graphic novel."

Her background in traditional Inuit mythology informed the creation of Snowguard's tattoos and the costume's amauti design, as well as general details about daily life in the Arctic.

"Nyla continues to read scripts as they're completed and gives feedback to myself and the Marvel editorial team on an ongoing basis when it comes to Snowguard," Zub said.

These efforts for authenticity are admirable not only for giving the character greater complexity but also because accurate representation is important. The cultural impact and identity discussions resulting from the Black Panther feature film are evidence of that.

"There is a certain amount of hesitancy that I feel when I hear about a non-Indigenous organization interpreting Inuit culture for a commercial project," said Innuksuk. "What I valued with Champions was that Jim and the team at Marvel had reached out early in the process to have input from an Inuk collaborator."

Previous Indigenous characters in comics have generally consisted of generic sidekicks like Tonto, caricatured shamans like Marvel's Shaman, or anachronistic relics of a colonially imagined past.

Notable Inuit superheroes include Nelvana, one of the first female superheroines, preceding even Wonder Woman. Inspired by Group of Seven painter Franz Johnston's experiences in the Arctic, she's described as a demi-goddess who is the protector of the Inuit people and can harness the powers of the Northern Lights.

Although Nelvana was sometimes portrayed insensitively, perhaps unsurprising with white-guy writers in the 1940s, it's her fictional descendent Snowbird who has proven more offensive for Indigenous readers. A member of 1980s Marvel team Alpha Flight, Snowbird is supposedly an Inuit superhuman yet inexplicably white, blond and blue-eyed.

Marvel's newest creation Snowguard has similar animalistic abilities to previous Indigenous superheroes but she's also a modern teen who cares about real issues and is trying to reconcile her new mystical powers with previous scepticism about her family's traditions.

"To see a young woman fighting for her community is the kind of story that needs to be told," said Innuksuk. "Indigenous women are often represented in mainstream media as victims, and to see a powerful young person who is fighting back against what she sees as wrong has the potential to make a real difference."

Snowguard's creation story may remind readers of another female Indigenous teen superhero, Equinox. Inspired by late Attawapiskat activist Shannen Koostachin and visits with students in Moosonee and Moose Factory, including Miyapin Cheechoo, Equinox is a uniquely Cree hero with powers derived from the Earth that change with the seasons.

Introduced by DC Comics and prominent creators Jeff Lemire and Mike McKone four years ago, she made a big media splash initially but then seemed to vanish after a few issues in Justice League United.

It's notoriously difficult to launch a new character in the crowded comic universe, with the preorder-based business model hindering the chances of books that might reach new audiences. Despite superhero film franchises dominating pop culture, print sales have been falling for decades.

While the mainstream industry is increasingly offering socially conscious books, featuring diverse and interesting characters, it's still mostly white males who are creating these stories.

Cree filmmaker Sonya Ballantyne was drawn to superhero stories from a young age, noticing how the experiences of characters like Superman, who lost his family and was raised in another culture, mirrored her own people.

Annoyed by media's common portrayal of Native women as victims, Ballantyne now creates short films that feature First Nations characters with superpowers.

"I created a character that I based around the question, what would Superman be like if he was a Cree girl?"

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NISKAMOON
CORPORATION

The Niskamoon Board of Directors and Staff wish all a wonderful National Indigenous Peoples Day!

We hope you have the opportunity to honour and celebrate our Cree Culture and heritage with your family and friends.

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Cree Nation of Mistissini

The Cree Nation of Mistissini wishes everyone a Happy National Indigenous Peoples Day!

Let us continue to keep our culture and traditions alive and strong.

Celebrate this day with pride!

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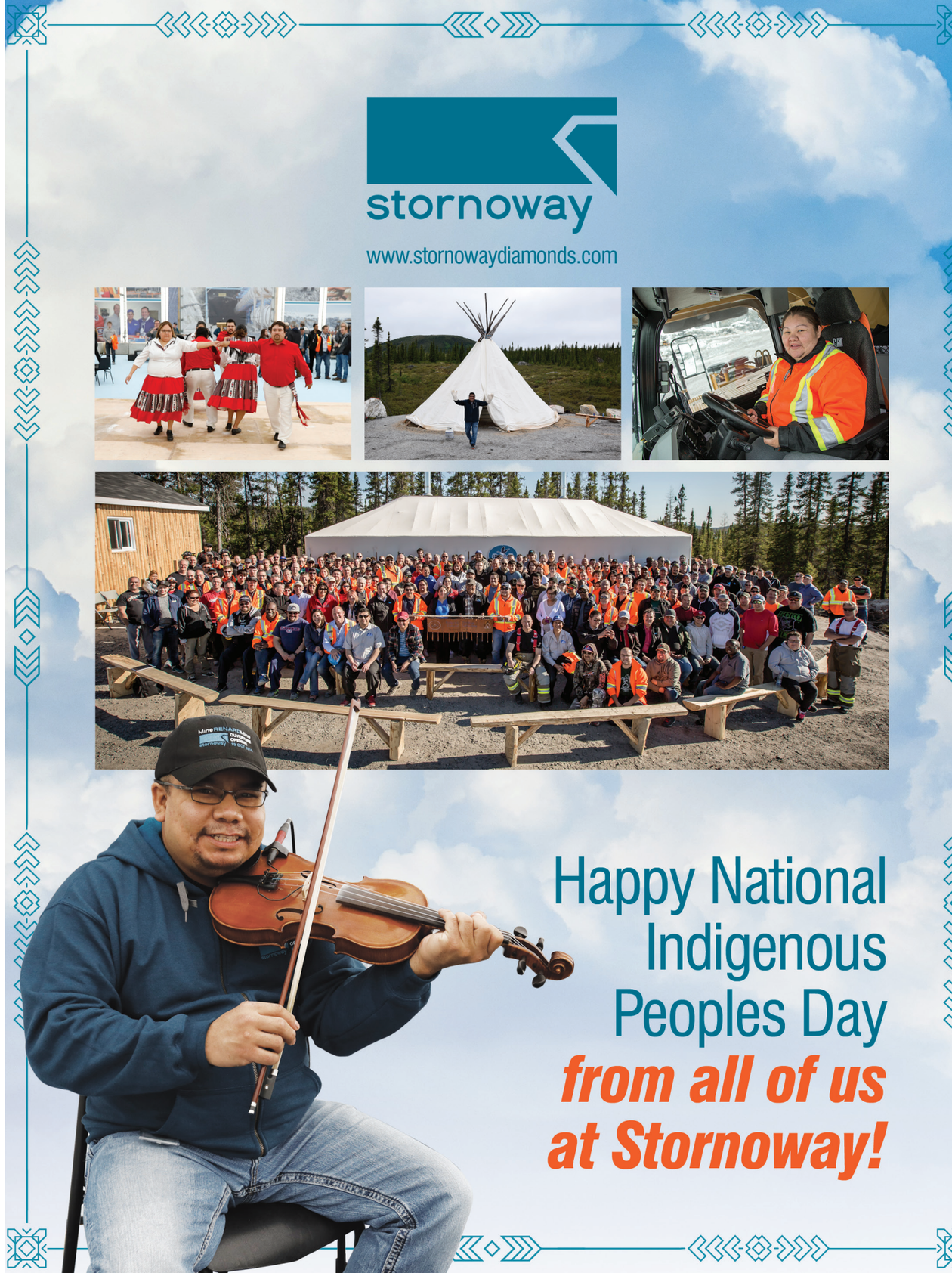

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Longest day, shortest night

by Sonny Orr

Rez Notes

Midnight in the North is an **unbelievable light show**

The waters are rushing off into swirls of pools glistening in the noonday sun. It's like a desert in intensity, yet there's water everywhere, trapped in its frozen form and rendered into the life of the earth – water. It's the sign of a late spring and after a long winter, the long days are here – the summer solstice.

The summer solstice has its special place in time, repeating itself once a year. This day is a time to revere, to revel and rebel, to relax and retire, to relate and retake summer once and for all. If anything is special to everyone, it's the summer solstice, which returns six months later Down Under, where shrimp are barbequed and the kangaroo roam, or rather, hop about.

Before the Dark Ages, back when clocks were set according to the alignments in the heavens, summer solstice was either a time to work the fields and harvest, or to relax and wait for winter to wrap up and summer activities to begin. For many, celebrations were in order. For some, even human sacrifice. But for most, it was a time to get together and enjoy summer.

Yes, summer solstice is officially recognized as a day to get into summer and feel good about the approaching heat waves while wishing you worked as a schoolteacher, so you could have the summer off. For our people, it's all about the summer – having fun, powwows and festivities, music and prayer, dance and seeing friends who disappear during the long winter months, and reflect about the hunting seasons. It's also about going to town for many revelers.

Midnight in the North is an unbelievable light show. The darkest is a light dark blue, like a late sunset or early sunrise, it's hard to tell the difference sometimes. Stars glimmer for an hour and only the brightest ones outshine the sun's shadow.

For all First Nations and Inuit of the North, it's a time for harvesting. It's the best time to set your nets and check them every three hours. Attracted to the sun's reflection, the fish converge around the light of the bright glow of a shore fire – netting for trout and whitefish can be bountiful at this time.

For the romantic type, the night is day all night long. Watching the sun rise after a few moments of darkness makes you want to hurry things up, because who wants broad daylight to ruin the might-have-beens' chances of scoring, if you know what I mean. So, it does have a little disadvantage in that area, but still, it's a summer night. If a full is involved, all the better.

For me, it's about fishing, or did I mention that already?

Gouvernement régional d'Eeyou Istchee Baie-James
Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government

Manon Cyr
Chairperson/Présidente

May this National Indigenous Peoples Day be a day of celebration for all.

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Que cette Journée Nationale des Peuples Autochtones soit une célébration pour tous!

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T AND B

Tea AND Bannock

Love letter for Indigenous youth

by Maïtée Labrecque-Saganash

The thing I like the most about my work is connecting with other Indigenous youth. We are often seen as cold statistics about suicide, incarceration or child welfare. But the youth are truly out there organizing revolution, creating and resisting.

I attended the DetermiNATION summit a few weeks ago and I was struck once again by how well-spoken young activists were, even though we were not given enough time or space to express ourselves. Thing is, we are often used as props for speeches or events without having our voices considered. It looks nice to talk about future generations, doesn't it?

The lack of support for the youth is devastating in many ways. Not only is the activism for our basic human rights often re-traumatizing, we don't have the support to put up a good fight. Having to share trauma over and over again with non-Natives so they understand how critical the situation is in our communities is tiring.

I feel the same way – at times my work hurts more than it empowers me. There is no emotional detachment possible. Fighting for Indigenous rights when you're Indigenous is draining, because we always have personal stories that go with statistics. You carry your family and yourself in thoughts with every fight you take on.

Some people advocate for the poor and the homeless, then return to their houses, food and comfort at night. Identity is not something we can leave at home whenever we want to. In fact, the greatest young Indigenous leaders I know have poor mental health.

Another great challenge is to educate youth without making them angry. Part of my work in communities is informing my peers that what they go through at home is not a coincidence. Indigenous peoples face systemic violence and organized destruction of their ways of life. Youth learning about the Indian Act and history of colonization provokes a lot of anger. How do we educate them about those things without leaving them angrier than they already are? I wish we had support or content to at least say: "Our people went through all of this, but here's what you can do about it."

Bill C-262, to enshrine the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canadian law, was adopted in the House of Commons May 30. For me, it represents a source of empowerment. With this declaration, youth can say with confidence: "I have the right to belong, to speak my language, to practice my spirituality, to have my land protected and to thrive as an individual within a community."

The declaration is also accessible language-wise. I always say that the language of law is very vague and prone to interpretations. Most Native languages are straightforward and descriptive. If you want people to be interested in laws or policies in our communities, we have to break down the very language of law. They often say Indigenous youth don't understand those things because we're not educated. They're wrong. Cree youth are brilliant and will adapt to anything if you adapt some concepts to our social codes.

If my work hurts more than it empowers me, having the opportunity to write to you every month is soothing. I hope that in my own way, I will be able to reach out to the youth on my territory. Grieve with them, heal with them, and fight alongside them.

Cree youth have taught me a lot about bush life, resilience and many other things. The work I do, I do for them. I was protesting the Kinder Morgan bailout the other day. Elizabeth May, the leader of the Green Party of Canada, was there and said: "When we talk about future generations and hypothetical kids, we should instead talk about the kids in front of us. They are the ones who will have to live with the consequences of our actions."

Reach out to us. Include us. Trust us.

Hôtel

Happy National Indigenous Peoples Day

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